

CHAPTER X

BUSINESS

Initial attempts to establish businesses in Wasatch County were necessarily sporadic. It could hardly have been otherwise since none of the original settlers had the capital to open a business; and a medium of exchange except for a few barterable articles, was not available. This chapter will, in tracing the beginning of business in the county, account the various ways in which sufficient capital to carry on business was raised.

Early attempts at merchandising were sponsored by men outside Wasatch County. Alex Wilkens, from Provo, first offered goods for sale on his ranch in the lower end of the valley in the summer and fall of 1861. Charles Shelton, later the county clerk, lived on the ranch and sold goods for Wilkens.¹

John Crook describes the nature of transactions in those days:

I well remember loading a big spring calf in my wagon one afternoon in the fall of 1861 and going to market. My wife, who went along to make the purchase of goods, returned with a small bundle of dry goods that you might crowd in your pocket. Dainties such as tea, coffee, sugar, etc., had to be dispensed with by the poorer class of people in those days. In fact we were all in about the same rank at that time. Our clothing was mostly in rags, we had been using old wagon covers and sacks made into clothing to cover our nakedness. We were glad to get something new for a change.²

Log cabins also housed other early businesses. Andrew J. Ross offered goods for sale in a cabin on Jesse

¹Crook, "History of Wasatch County," *Wasatch Wave*, December 14, 1889.

²*Ibid.*

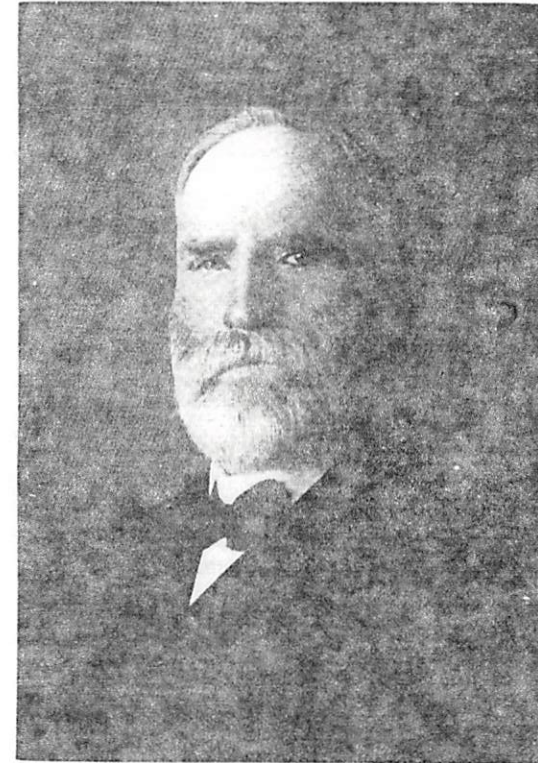
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Bond's lot in Heber, and was followed by Snyder and Company from Wanship, who used William Davidson's cabin. William Jennings of Salt Lake City took over the



Mark Jeffs

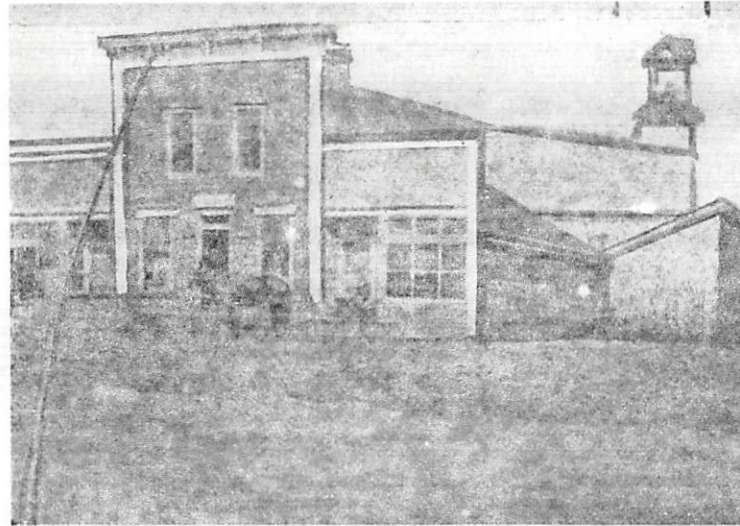
trade when Snyder and Company withdrew a year or two later. He hired John Davis as his clerk. Finally John Witt of Heber began merchandising in much the same manner.

All of these attempts were made in a three-year period and all of them were fruitless. No one had any money. The stock of goods in the log cabin trade was small and had to be hauled many miles to Heber.

The event that was to change this picture was the stagecoach contract. In 1862 Ben Holliday took over the stagecoach route and government mail contract between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California.³ Salt Lake City was the center of the route and the hub for the branch lines that extended to the towns and mining camps of Southern Utah, Idaho, Nevada, and Montana.

Every ten or twelve miles along the route were stations where hay and grain were kept to supply the changes of horse and mule teams for the stagecoach.

³Neff, *op. cit.*, p. 734.



Charleston Coop.

In 1863, John W. Witt of Heber was given a contract to supply oats to the stations as far east as Green River. Under this contract, companies of men with teams and



Nymphus Murdock



Frederick O. Buell

wagons periodically set out from Heber to supply stations. There was work for everyone with a wagon. According to John Crook:

This was the beginning of good times for Heber. Plenty of money rolled in. Grain kept raising until it reached \$3.00 a bushel for oats and \$5.00 for wheat. Merchandise was high also. Stoves were from \$150 to \$200 each. Sugar and nails were \$1.00 a pound. Factory and prints cost \$.50 to \$1.00 per yard. A good wagon cost \$300 and everything else in proportion.⁴

⁴Crook, "History of Wasatch County," *Wasatch Wave*, December 14, 1889.